

Message Text

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SUBJECT: REPORT OF LARGE-SCALE KURDISH RETURN TO IRAQ

THE GUARDIAN MAY 1 CONTAINS FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY JOHN STATHATOS ON LARGE-SCALE RETURN OF KURDS FROM IRAN AND THE RELATIVELY TOLERANT RECEPTION ACCORDED THEM BY IRAQI AUTHORITIES--WITH THE EXCEPTION OF TWO GROUPS:

"ACCORDING TO REPORTS WHICH HAVE REACHED LONDON FROM OFFICIAL KURDISH SOURCES IN THE AFFECTED AREAS, AT LEAST 100,000 OF THE KURDISH REFUGEES WHO FLED TO IRAN AFTER LAST MONTH'S FIGHTING HAVE ELECTED TO RETURN TO IRAQ.

"THE KURDS REPORT THAT THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSCIOUS PERHAPS OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN, HAS BEEN TREATING MOST OF THOSE WHO RETURN WITH LENIENCY, AND THAT FEARS OF MASS REPRISALS HAVE NOT BEEN BORNE OUT.

"THE RETURN TO IRAQ APPARENTLY STARTED AFTER A
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VISIT ON APRIL 10 BY GENERAL BARZANI'S SON, IDRIS, TO

THE LARGE REFUGEE CAMP AT NAGADA, NEAR THE IRAQI BORDER. ACCOMPANIED BY KURDISTAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECRETARY, DR. MAHMOUD OSMAN, THE KURDISH LEADER'S SON EXPLAINED TO THE REFUGEES THAT THE KDP HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO CONSIDER THE KURDISH STRUGGLE IN IRAQ AT AN END, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING.

"THE REFUGEES WERE LEFT TO MAKE UP THEIR OWN MINDS WHETHER TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES. FOR MANY FAMILIES THE DECIDING FACTOR SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A DEEP MISTRUST OF IRANIAN INTENTIONS AND THE REFUGEE WOMEN'S DESIRE TO BRING UP THEIR CHILDREN IN A FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT.

"THE IRAQIS SEEM DETERMINED TO STAMP OUT LINGERING TRACES OF ACTIVE NATIONALISM AMONG THOSE WHO RETURN. THEY ARE INTERROGATED AT THE BORDER AND MUST FILL IN A LONG QUESTIONNAIRE DEALING WITH THEIR ACTIVITIES DURING THE REVOLT. THEY ARE ALSO REQUIRED TO NAME THREE MEMBERS OF THE PARASTIN, OR KURDISH SECURITY ORGANIZATION.

"FINALLY, BEFORE BEING ALLOWED TO CONTINUE, THEY MUST SIGN A DECLARATION STATING THAT THEY WERE FORCED TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES BY THE KDP.

"IN SPITE OF THE UNEXPECTED IRAQI MODERATION, THERE IS CONCERN FOR TWO GROUPS OF KURDISH REFUGEES WHO, UNLIKE THEIR FELLOWS, ARE NOT BEING ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THEIR HOME AREAS.

"THE FIRST GROUP CONSISTS OF THOSE WHO USED TO LIVE IN ONE OF THE THREE KEY AREAS OF KIRKUK, SINJAR NEAR THE SYRIAN BORDER, AND KHANAKHIN IN THE FAR SOUTHEAST OF THE KURDISH ZONE. THESE AREAS ARE UNDERGOING INTENSIVE 'ARABIZATION,' AND THE KDP CLAIMS THAT EGYPTIAN PEASANTS HAVE BEEN SETTLED AROUND KIRKUK.

"THE SECOND GROUP, FOR WHICH THE GREATEST ANXIETY IS FELT, CONSISTS OF THOSE KURDS WHO LEFT THE IRAQI ARMY AFTER THE START OF THE REVOLT TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE THE PESH MERGA. ALL MEN IDENTIFIED AS COMING UNDER THIS CATEGORY ARE BEING HELD AT A PRISON CAMP NEAR DIWANIYA, IN SOUTHERN IRAQ, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO INDICATION OF THEIR FATE."

RICHARDSON

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